

Minutes June 11, 2018 karoEcho Meeting

The minutes were approved

### **Old Business**

Ginny's award. Ginny is in assisted living in Oakland's Piedmont Gardens. Hal reported that she does not want a radio or even a HT. Hal said that he would make her up a nice certificate of appreciation for her many years of dedication to KaroEcho

### **New Business**

Hal gave a report on KaroEcho's equipment inventory.

There are 5 installed radios in Kensington/and 5 in El Cerrito –

To wit:

There is an extra radio in the back room of FS 65 (making it 2).and 200' of RG-9913F coax.

There is 1 radio at KCC

1 at the Kensington Hilltop School

Where is the fifth radio?

El Cerrito has 1 radio each at FS 72, FS 71, and the EOC. 1 assumed lost radio was found in FS71 basement. An extra Diamond X-300a antenna is also in the fs71 basement.

The El Cerrito Senior Center radio is at Jamuel's for programming along with g with the FS 71 basement radio, and another Kensington radio.

The El Cerrito Senior Center antenna is at the City's Corporation yard.

FS71 also has 1 Alinco 2M packet/radio combo rig.

Don was given 1 Kenwood TK-760HG1 radio for programming and Anderson Power Pole installation which was successful. That radio has been lent out to the digital committee work group. If possible two more TK-760HG1 radios might be made available. These are 45 watt 2m radios.

Don installed Anderson Power poles on the Astron 35 amp power supply that was previously at the EC Senior Center; but is now in storage.

Ken Horn's (sk) antenna located on Lexington in Kensington was targeted for repurposing to Kensington 6 CERT ICP (Colusa Circle).

The antenna at the corporation yard has been targeted for repurposing at Tassajara Park (EC9 ICP).

A brief discussion on the need for **FRS/GMRS channel coordination** in order to avoid interference followed. KaroEcho will continue to do FRS/GMRS channel coordinating until CERT becomes capable of doing such a task by itself.

Don presented the possibility of a parallel GMRS system and the possible installation of a GMRS radio and antenna at the EOC.

*Note that at a follow-up meeting with Chief Janes the possibility of a GMRS radio, antenna, and a packet system installed at the EOC was nixed due to physical limitations.*

### **Don reported on the digital committee**

The Alinco 2m packet rig at FS 71 is worthless as it is because it is hooked up to a sub-Pentium computer, a dot matrix printer, and an out of date windows operating system. A further problem is that because the radio is 2m only; it would desense the existing dualband radio installed in the same room and whose antennas are in the same horizontal plane 20' away (bad news). Don suggested relocating the 2m Alinco packet station and updating the system.

A parallel digital system was proposed where unattended operation could facilitate error free digital comms coming into the EOC thus relieving congestion on our primary voice frequency via a dual port/dual band packet radio system.

Don outlined a BBS LAN dual port system, the utilization if a Raspberry Pi computer and Pi TNC dual port system. Rob also contributed to the discussion. Although Marin and Santa Clara Counties already have an extensive packet system in place, the digital committee will attempt to prove the concept experientially in the coming months.

Texx rightly noted that the windshield surveys alone will clog the primary voice channel

Packet is being proposed as an adjunct, not a replacement. It was decided that whatever the final digital system looks like, it should be air gapped from the internet.

A brief discussion on a MESH system was discussed and led by Texx introducing a MESH CAD system.

### **Portable Go-Kit**

Don presented the state of the portable High power Go-kit with gain antenna. Its purpose is to provide emergency communications anywhere in our district because we will find out that handheld 5 watt rigs with rubber duck antennas will not be sufficient simplex to each other. There will be a need for at least one decent gain antenna and some added power in marginal situations.

The portable go-kit could be used at an alternative EOC or secondary ICP, at a shelter, or any designated area which has marginal communications ability.

Hal suggested that it was not needed and was too expensive. Don said that all the equipment was already owned and the only extra expense was the coax, the battery, and the cart. Texx mentioned that we could use milk crates or ammo cans and forego the cost of the raintight

cart on wheels. Don said did not think it was a good idea in the pouring rain, while an ammo can would not be large enough for a 50 watt radio and adequate battery.

Jay, KJ6WSS suggested a smaller 25 watt radio, wooden go-kit box and a 20 ah LiIron Battery (cost \$200 for the battery and \$125 for the radio). Don thought that 20 AH would last approximately 5 hours at 25 watts if the site was being used regularly. This is based on 50% keydown usage at 25 watts. Thus a larger more expensive battery would be needed.

The portable go-kit (which is now complete) however, is a 50 watt portable system, versus 5 or 25 watts and has a 100 AH battery. It should do the job for 2-3 days at 50% duty cycle. That is what it is tasked for. Hal voiced concern that it was too expensive.

KJ6WSS reported on the Btech dual port 25 watt radio (\$125) using Li-Iron batteries (at \$10/amp hour), ergo, a 30 AH battery = \$300. Add a high-tech fused power strip at \$70, plus coax and chargers = approximately \$600.

Texx suggested that we use milk crates to crate around the radios and batteries; but that won't work well in the rain or mud.

Jay proposed wooden boxes for go-kits except not on wheels. An additional \$200 figure was for 20 AH Li-Iron battery. An unanswered question was how long will a 20 ah battery run a 25 watt rig?

Hal brought up concerns for the high cost of funding go-kits and radios – but the fact is that KaroEcho is not short on radios or antennas. Rather they are rotting in storage.

Hal says there are 3 options for CERT  
Base stations in place, Portable Go-Kits, and HTs with rubber duckies.

### **VE program and Ham Cram for recruitment**

Don lead:

Ham Cram and VE – follow up mentoring program

The illusion that there are ham crams offered every weekend was dispelled. The illusion that there were ham crams offered every month was dispelled. These illusions are crippling. The fact is that there are at the most 6 ham crams offered per year in the Bay Area

We need a venue to hold a local ham cram and host a VEC test. We could talk up the test at local service groups, church groups, CERT trainings, Salvation Army, other club newsletters, PTA, Neighborhood Watch, digital media outlets, and newspapers. .

Texx, Jerry, and Marian mentioned that Karo-Echo used to sponsor Ham classes at Hilltop School. There appeared much opposition for KaroEcho to support such an endeavor; but no

alternative recruiting strategy was offered in its place.

**A Red Flag Fire Safety Patrol** was discussed. After long discussion with Fire Marshall Gibson who was supportive of a KaroEcho Fire Patrol. Don proposed that we either shit or get off the pot. A poll showed 7 members interested in order to ascertain if we had enough members to make a proposal to Chief Janes. Hal did not understand why Chief Janes was involved. Don mentioned because it is Chief Janes who is after all the Emergency Management System go-to person and the CERT coordinator for the Fire Department.

Marian proposed that we do not need to involve radios or the Fire Department. The general idea was just do it (make it organic) and notify the Fire Department that we were doing it. Don voiced that he was through with unorganized “organic” nonsense; which never seems to get done; but if radios were not involved, why then would KaroEcho become involved. Texx and Don both wondered if this was just a fool’s errand. Seven members showed interest in participating but no plan was established. Don said that he would contact Chief Janes when he returned from his vacation (as Fire Marshall Gibson had suggested) to coordinate efforts, as Don was hesitant to do this without first contacting KJ. Consequently, the general consensus was that no coordination was necessary.

Note: Subsequently, Don, Rob, and David met with Chief Janes. It was determined that radios were optional/not needed. Rather calls into 911 via cell phones would be preferred. Rob with David decided to take up the matter of Red Flag Fire patrol while Don decided to pursue other matters.

Don reported on the **FAGES 20 mile Boy Scout hike**. Texx and KG6ATH and Don (NI6A) worked the event and reported encouraging KaroEcho to support it next year.

**Engagement: Use it or lose it.**

**Armando made a very cogent observation.** Stating that checking into the net one day a week, “won’t cut it”. Armando said that if we do not keep the members engaged then we will lose members. We need more than a net to do it. Hal asserted because KaroEcho has 5 times the radios than we had previously suggesting that would keep people engaged. Basically, no one directly addressed Armando’s concern.

Next on the agenda was the planning of a Simulated Emergency test (SET). But we ran out of time for that agenda item. The meeting was adjourned. Because of the overtime, the hands-on battery/emergency power discussion and “show and tell” segment was unfortunately cancelled as people started to leave. Such will be proposed on the future.

Minutes respectfully submitted, by NI6A